

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06
CCO-00 MCT-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 EB-07 COME-00 SCS-03
SCA-01 FBO-02 CU-02 /105 W
-----201653Z 117011 /43

O 201600Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 842

INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 7396

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION SINAI

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, EG

SUBJECT: CAIRO SITREP 1700 JAN 20

REF: CAIRO 1083 (NOTAL)

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SUMMARY: JANUARY 18/19 RIOTS TRIGGERED BY PRICE RISES ON SUBSIDIZED
FOOD ITEMS AND SEIZED UPON BY WELL-ORGANIZED DISSIDENT GROUPS,
EXPECIALLY MARXIST/NASSERISTS, TO DISCREDIT GOE. GOE HAS
APPARENTLY NOT "RESCINDED/ BUT SUSPENDED ACTION ON PRICE RISES.
IT SUFFERED DEFEAT, BUT HOW SERIOUS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. AT
MINIMUM, THOSE VOICES IN GOE ARGUING AGAINST IMF AND OTHER MEASURES
INVOLVING PRICE INCREASES ARE STRENGTHENED. IMAGE OF POLITCAL

STABILITY SADAT HAS BEEN SEEKING TO PROJECT HAS BEEN DAMAGED AT HOME AND ABROAD. PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY FURIOUS. HE MAY BE EXPECTED TO TAKE STRONG ACTION TO REDRESS SITUATION AND WE HEAR HE MAY MAKE SPEECH TOMORROW. THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES SITUATION AS OF 1700 JANUARY 20. END SUMMARY.

1. DISTURBANCES JANUARY 19. PRESS ACCOUNTS CONFIRM EXTENSIVE RIOTING AND VIOLENCE JANUARY 19 IN GIZA, IMBABA, BULAQ, EZBEKIYA AND SAYIDA ZAYNAB IN CAIRO AND SIMILAR SERIOUS DISTURBANCES IN QENA AND MINYA ((FIRST MENTION OF UPPER EGYPTIAN TOWNS), ALEXANDRIA, MANSURA AND SUEZ. REPORTS ACCOMPANIED BY EXTENSIVE PHOTO COVERAGE AND TV HAD SENSATIONAL FOOTAGE OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND BUS BURNINGS. IN CAIRO RIOTS CONTINUED UNTIL 1830 IN SHUBRA, ROD EL FARAG AND BAB SHA'RIYA DESPITE 1600 CURFEW. AS CURFEW APPROACHED, MASSES STRANDED WITHOUT PUBLIC TRANSPORT BEGAN COMANDEERING PRIVATE CARS, AS WAS CASE DURING SEPTEMBER BUS STRIKE. AT 1730 AMERICAN JOURNALIST (FOREIGN JOURNALISTS WERE GRANTED CURFEW PASSES) WATCHED ARMY TROOPS (CARRYING, BUT NOT USING, B-2 ROCKETS) DISPERSE CROWDS NEAR HILTON AND ON JULY 26 BRIDGE WITH TEAR GAS AND BY FIRING SMALL (10 INCH) CONCUSSION BOMBS INTO AIR.

2. THERE WAS SHARP REDUCTION IN RIOTING AFTER 1800 WITH ARMY CONSPICUOUSLY POSTED ABOUT CITY. NEITHER BALTIMORE SUN OR NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENTS SAW DEMONSTRATIONS NIGHT OF JANUARY 19, EVEN IN SHUBRA WORKING CLASS TINDERBOX. INTENSE RIOTING DID CONTINUE IN GIZA SQUARE THROUGHOUT EARLY EVENING, INCLUDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BURNING OF FIVE BUSES AND DISMANTLING OF FIVE ARMY OR POLICE JEEPS. POST-CURFEW VIOLENCE, BY HOOLIGANS WITH CROWBARS, ALSO NOTED IN AREA OF BRIDGE JOINING ZAMALEK DISTRICT WITH DOWNTOWN..

3. CASUALTIES, ARRESTS: PRESS FIGURE FOR CASUALTIES AMONG POLICE AND RIOTERS WAS 29 KILLED AND 267 INJURED IN CAIRO; 10 KILLED AND 180 CITIZENS AND 60 POLICE INJURED IN ALEXANDRIA, WHERE 300 RIOTERS ARRESTED. ACTUAL CASUALTY FIGURES MAY BE HIGHER. LABOR CONTACT PHONED EMBOFF WITH REPORT THAT "OUR FRIENDS", I.E. LABOR LEFTISTS, ROUNDED UP LAST NIGHT. WE UNDERSTAND EIGHT LEFTIST JOURNALISTS ALSO DETAINED.

4. SLOGANS HEARD YESTERDAY STRUCK CLOSE TO SADAT INCLUDING: "SADAT FOLLOWS LATEST FASHIONS WHILE WE LIVE SEVEN TO A ROOM"; "WE ASK FOR ONLY A PIASTER, WHILE PRESIDENT'S STOMACH GROWS"; "NASSER, NASSER, RISE UP FROM YOUR GRACE AND SEE THE ASS (SADAT)"; "WE DON'T STOP UNTIL RID OF THE THREE: SALIM, MAR'I AND JOHAN" AND "OH, RULER COME DOWN FROM ABDIN (PRESIDENTIAL PALACE), YOU WHO ARE

MISUING RELIGION TO RULE".

5. RIOTS IN GIZA AND ELSEWHERE ALSO PRODUCED DWSTRUCTION AND/OR DAMAGE TO NIGHTCLUBS, CAUSING SPECULATION THAT THIS MIGHT BE HANDIWORK OF MUSLIM EXTREMISTS WHO USING DEMONSTRATIONS TO VENT THEIR DISPLEASURE ON THESE SYMBOLS OF SECULARISM. MORE LIKELY EXPLANATION IS INHABITANTS' RESENTMENT AT STRING OF FLASHY NEW NIGHTCLUBS RECENTLY BUILT IN THIS POOR SECTION OF CITY.

6. JANUARY 20; AS RESULT GOE DECISIONS TO BRING OUT ARMY (REFTEL) AND TO "SUSPEND ACTION" (NOT "RECIND" AS INCORRECTLY REPORTED YESTERDAY) ON PRICE RISES, VIOLENCE ENDED JAN 20. EYEWITNESS REPORTS INDICATE SITUATION SEEMS STABLIZED AS OF 1500 JAN 20, INCLUDING ALEXANDRIA, HELWAN, MAHALLA AL KUBRA AND PORT SAID. NO DEMONSTRATIONS REPORTED ANYWHERE IN COUNTRY. PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAIRO OPERATING BUT TRAFFIC IS LIGHT. AT NOON CAIRO RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT CURFEW WILL BEGIN AT 1900 LOCAL TODAY INSTEAD OF 1600, AND EXTEND TO 0600. ARMORED CARS AND TRUCKLOADS OF TROOPS STATIONED AT S IATEGIC INTERSECTIONS, BRIDGES, AND MAJOR ARTERIES INTO CAIRO. HOUSES OF MINISTERS AND SPEAKER MAR'I NOW GUARDED BY PRESIDENTIAL GUARDSMEN (HARAS AL-GUMHURIYA).

7 AMCITS AND PROPERTY. THERE ARE NO REPORTS THAT AMERICAN CITIZENS INJURED IN DISTURBANCES. DAMAGE TO AMERICAN PROPERTY LIMITED TO EXTENSIVE WINDOW BREAKAGE AT AUC SCIENCE BUILDING (ROUGHLY ESTIMATED AT \$8,000, BUT FULLY INSURED). TWO USG-OWNED VEHICLES, ONE TRANSPORTING AID DIRECTOR TO HIS HOME, SUFFERED BROKEN WINDOWS FROM ROWDY YOUTHS YESTERDAY AFTERNOON. EILTS

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